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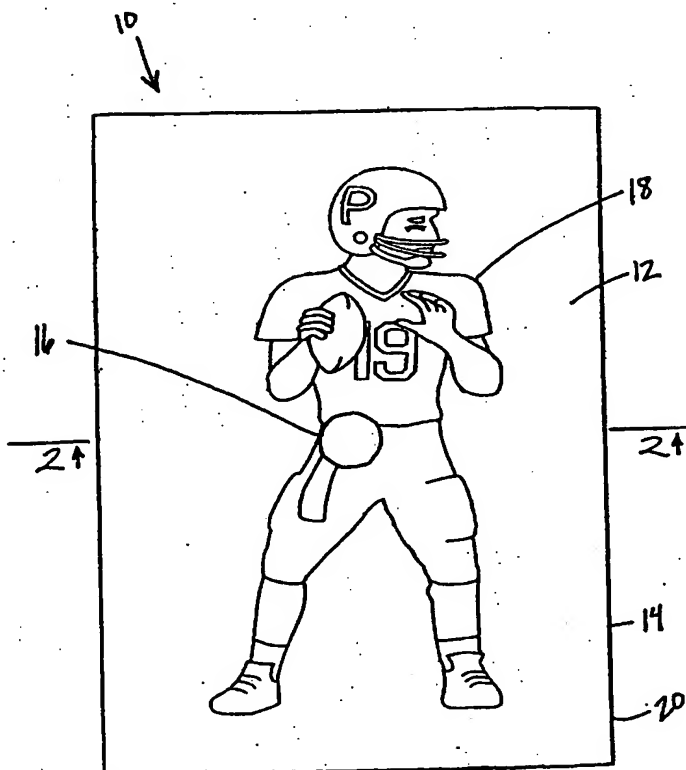
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(54) Title: DIGITAL DATA TRADING OR GIFT CARD



(57) Abstract: A digital data trading card (10), gift card or video game card comprising a substrate having a front surface (12) and a rear surface (14), a decorated graphic layer applied to at least one surface of the substrate, digital data recorded on the substrate and a protective coating applied over the entire surface of the card. The digital data includes audio, video and textual data embedded or recorded on at least one surface of the card using known techniques for manufacturing CDs and DVDs. The data can be retrieved or initialized with common hardware and software such as a computer, CD player, DVD player or video game player.

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DIGITAL DATA TRADING OR GIFT CARD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/476,916, filed June 9, 2003.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to collectable trading cards, gift cards or video game cartridges purchased at many retail establishments, and more particularly to an electronic trading card, gift card or video game card having digital data stored thereon.

10

Trading card collections have been a favorite past time for children and adults for many years. Trading cards have been available and existed in essentially the same form since the turn of the century. Trading cards have become a recognizable form in and of themselves. These cards are generally a piece of cardboard decorated with an action photograph or other image of a person or athlete on the front surface and statistics and other personal information on the back surface. A number of trading cards are packaged together and sold in foil packets with several different cards in each packet.

15

In recent years, collecting trading cards has increased in popularity. Card manufacturers have responded to this increase in popularity by introducing innovations. Much effort has gone into making the trading cards more visually appealing through impressive graphics and printing techniques that add visually exciting effects to the cards. These techniques have included adding three-dimensional images, holographic images and gold or silver plating. However,

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conventional trading cards are passive, and the information provided thereon has remained fairly constant over the years.

Gift cards have also increased in popularity among retailers and consumers. A gift card acts essentially as a gift certificate with an amount of money encoded on a magnetic strip on the back of the card. The gift card is usually given as a gift to someone for purchasing products at the particular establishment issuing the gift card. The magnetic strip stores the monetary value of the card. Once the card is used, the monetary amount of the purchases is deducted from the monetary value encoded on the magnetic strip of the card.

Compact Discs (CDs) and Digital Versatile Discs (DVDs) provide a medium for storing high-density digital video and audio for playback on a personal computer or an appropriate CD or DVD player. The data stored on these high-density optical discs may include sports information or athlete profiles that are currently found on trading cards. However, there have not been any CDs or DVDs developed that feature prominent individuals with commemorative embellishments on their exterior such as found on current trading cards. CDs and DVDs are capable of being made into various shapes, such as business cards for use as electronic business cards to be read by a computer or other CD/DVD player. However, there are not any CDs or DVDs available in the shape of trading or gift cards.

Video game cartridges are another medium used to store video and audio data for use with video games. The software programs on these cartridges are interactive in nature, providing a game matrix, which the player manipulates. The small size of these cartridges lend themselves to commemorative applications. Furthermore, these cartridges have never been decorated with photographs of people or action sequences

in a commemorative fashion. Hand-held video game units would also be compatible for use with collectable video game cards. The portable size and ability to run on batteries would make it flexible for trading activities.

Therefore, a need exists for an electronic trading card, gift card or video game
5 card having digital data stored thereon for collecting and playback on a CD/DVD
player, computer or video game unit. The present invention provides for the
recognized need and demand for electronic trading cards, gift cards and video game
cards that store digital data, are interactive, provide Internet compatibility, and
provide more information and more value than conventional passive trading or gift
10 cards.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an electronic trading card, gift or video game
card storing digital data for retrieval by CD or DVD players, video game players,
and/or computers. The trading card, gift card and video game card of the present
15 invention preferably includes digital data storage capabilities for storing audio, video
and textual data. The electronic trading card, gift card and video game card of the
present invention would preferably be the same size, shape and thickness of a
conventional trading card, gift card or video game cartridge.

In one embodiment, the present invention preferably includes a decorated
20 trading card, and instead of using expensive printing techniques to enhance the visual
appeal of the card, the visual appeal is being embedded as digital data in the card,
such as pictures, video clips, audio, text, links to Web sites with special offers or
information, etc. The cards could be traded on-line through a protected Web site.

The electronic trading card of the present invention preferably includes a decorative graphic or printing on the front side of the card and digital data embedded or stored on the rear side of the card, like conventional CDs or DVDs. There are various ways to decorate the card, including heat transfer printing, and various other
5 printing techniques that are known in the prior art.

The electronic trading card of the present invention preferably includes a decorated surface similar in appeal to a standard trading card with the opposing surface containing digital data, such as audio, video, or textual data that can be retrieved or initialized with common hardware and software such as computers, CD
10 players, DVD players, etc. The digital data is preferably recorded on the rear surface of the card using known techniques for manufacturing CDs and DVDs. This data preferably includes text, audio and visual data that has been added to CDs and DVDs for retrieval when placed in a CD player or DVD player.

The electronic trading card of the present invention is also preferably designed
15 to be the same shape, size and thickness of conventional trading cards. They are also preferably designed to fit in the foil pack of trading cards and be indistinguishable from the other trading cards in the pack.

The electronic trading card of the present invention is designed to withstand manufacturing stresses, handling, and insertion into foil packs or other packaging
20 systems, such that a special protective case is not required. The card is designed to be more robust than prior art cards. These design improvements include a scratch resistant coating, a tougher plastic material, more robust materials, etc.

In another embodiment, the present invention includes a decorated gift card with graphics and/or text preferably printed on the front side of the card and digital

data stored or recorded on the rear side of the card. The gift card may preferably be inserted into a CD or DVD player, and have information for the consumer and/or links to the retailer's Web site with special offers or deals for the gift card holder and where the gift card holder can view and order merchandise. The electronic gift card
5 of the present invention would preferably be the same shape, size and thickness of a credit card or conventional gift card.

In another embodiment, the present invention includes a decorated video game cartridge with graphics and/or text preferably printed on the front side of the card and digital data stored in the card for playback on a computer or video game player unit.

10 Various other features, objects, and advantages of the invention will be made apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of the front of a trading card constructed in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

15 FIG. 2 is cross-sectional view of the trading card of FIG. 1, taken along line 2-2 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the front of a gift card constructed in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention;

20 FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of the gift card of FIG. 3, taken along line 4-4 of FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the front of a video game card constructed in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 6 is a cross-sectional view of the video game card of FIG. 5, taken along line 6-6 of FIG. 5.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

As mentioned above, the present invention provides an electronic trading card,
5 gift card or video game card storing digital data for retrieval by CD or DVD players, video game players, and/or computers. The trading card, gift card or video game card of the present invention preferably includes digital data storage capabilities for storing audio, video and textual data. The electronic trading card, gift card or video game
10 card uses high-density disc technology for storing digital data on the cards. CDs are known for storing high quality audio and/or textual data and DVDs are known for storing high quality digital video. DVDs typically include full-length feature films and interactive computer games with highly advanced graphics.

Every CD or DVD includes data that is recorded on a spiral track of lands and pits that spirals from the inside of the CD/DVD in a counter-clockwise direction all
15 the way to the outer edge of the CD/DVD. The data is read with a laser beam. When reading the data, the drive guides the laser beam along the track of lands and pits that have been formed in the rear surface of the CD or DVD. The laser will either reflect off a land into a sensor, or scatter off of a pit away from the sensor. The reflectivity of the track's surface will either reflect the laser beam back to the sensor or scatter it
20 away. This reflection of the laser beam from the surface of the track back to the laser assembly is how the 1s and 0s of digital data are read.

A DVD is a high-density disc with approximately four times as many lands and pits as a CD in the same size area. During the manufacturing process, the laser creates smaller pits along a tighter spiral. The result is an optical disc that can hold up

to 26 times the data of a CD. DVDs can store from 4.7GB (single-sided, single layer) to 17.0GB (double-sided, dual layer) with up to 133 minutes of MPEG-2 video on each layer. With its superior audio and video quality, increased data capacity, interactive potential and Internet compatibility, DVD is a medium for the future.

- 5 Typical DVD formats include: single-sided, single layer; single-sided, dual layer; double-sided, single layer; double-sided, single layer or double layer; and double-sided, double layer. These formats may include bonding two substrates together creating a double-sided disc with the option of one or two layers per side.

- CDs and DVDs are typically manufactured using several steps. These steps
10 may include the following: glass mastering, electroplating, stamping, molding, metallization, lacquering, printing and packaging.

- Referring now to the drawings, FIG. 1 is a view of the front side or front surface of a digital data trading card constructed in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment preferably includes a trading card
15 having a front surface 12, a rear surface 14 and a hole or opening 16 extending through the center of the card. Instead of using expensive printing techniques to enhance the visual appeal of the card, the visual appeal is being embedded as digital data in the card, such as pictures, video clips, audio, text, links to Web sites with special offers or information, etc. The cards could be traded on-line through a
20 protected Web site.

The trading card 10 preferably includes a graphic or some other decoration 18 preferably printed on the front surface 12 of the card and digital data 20 recorded on the rear surface 14 of the card, like conventional CDs or DVDs. There are various

ways to decorate the card, including heat transfer printing, and various other printing techniques that are known in the prior art.

The decorated surface 12 is preferably similar in appeal to a standard trading/collectable card. The card could be a sports or character trading card, a
5 NASCAR trading/collectable card, a fantasy collectable game card, etc. The card could also be used on video games to create special players or characters not available the standard video games. An example would be a special character or player with desirable properties not present in the standard game being distributed on a limited basis, hidden in the foil packs of trading cards. The special card would have unique
10 information, data, or a digital enhancement package that would enhance the program and thereby creating value and a desire to collect the cards.

The opposing surface 14 preferably contains digital data 20, such as audio, video and textual data that can be retrieved or initialized with common hardware and software such as computers, CD players, DVD players, video game players, etc. The
15 digital data 20 is preferably recorded on the rear surface 14 of the card using known CD and DVD manufacturing techniques. The digital data 20 recorded on the card is designed to enhance the digital electronic programs of the owner of the card, including PC based video games, CD/DVD based video games, and the like.

FIG. 2 is cross-sectional view of the trading card 10 of FIG. 1. The electronic
20 trading card 10 is preferably the same size, shape and thickness of a conventional cardboard trading card. The electronic trading card also preferably fits in the foil pack of trading cards and is indistinguishable from the other trading cards in the pack. The trading card 10 is preferably designed to withstand manufacturing stresses, handling, and insertion into foil packs or other packaging systems, such that a special

protective case is not required. The trading card 10 of the present invention is preferably more robust than prior art trading cards and includes a scratch resistant coating 22 applied over the entire surface of the card 10. The trading card 10 is preferably made of a plastic material, such as polycarbonate, to allow for recording of

5 digital data 20 on the rear surface 14 of the card 10.

FIG. 3 is a view of the front surface of a digital data gift card constructed in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment preferably includes a gift card 30 having a front surface 32, a rear surface 34 and a hole or opening 36 extending through the center of the card. The gift card 30

10 preferably includes a graphic or some other decoration 38 preferably printed on the front surface 32 of the card and digital data 40 recorded on the rear surface 34 of the card, like conventional CDs or DVDs. The front surface 32 of the card may be decorated using various printing techniques known in the prior art.

The opposing rear surface 34 preferably contains digital data 40, such as

15 audio, video, text, or links to Web sites that can be retrieved or initialized with common hardware and software such as computers, CD players, DVD players, etc. The gift card 30 may preferably be inserted into a CD or DVD player, and have information for the consumer and/or links to a retailer's Web site with special offers or deals for the gift card holder and where the gift card holder can view and order

20 merchandise. The digital data 40 recorded on the rear surface 34 of the card is preferably recorded using known techniques used in manufacturing CDs and DVDs.

FIG. 4 is cross-sectional view of the gift card 30 of FIG. 3. The gift card 30 is preferably the same size, shape and thickness of a conventional credit card or gift card. The gift card 30 is preferably designed to withstand manufacturing stresses,

handling, and packaging. The gift card 30 is preferably more robust than prior art gift cards with a scratch resistant coating 42 applied over the entire surface of the card. The gift card 30 is preferably made of a plastic material, such as polycarbonate, to allow for recording of digital data 40 on the rear surface 34 of the card 30.

5 FIG. 5 is a view of the front surface of a video game card constructed in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment preferably includes a video game card 50 having a front surface 52 and a rear surface 54. The video game card 50 preferably includes a graphic or some other decoration 58 preferably printed on the front surface 52 of the card and digital data 56 recorded
10 on the rear surface 54 of the card. The front surface 52 of the card may be decorated with a graphic 58 using various printing techniques known in the prior art.

 The decorated surface 52 is preferably similar in appeal to a standard trading/collectable card. The opposing rear surface 54 preferably contains digital data 56, such as audio, video, text, or links to Web sites that can be retrieved or initialized
15 with common hardware and software such as computers, video game players, CD players, DVD players, etc. The digital data 56 may preferably include special players or characters not available in standard video games. An example would be a special character or player with desirable properties not present in the standard game being distributed on a limited basis, hidden in the foil packs of trading cards. The special
20 card would preferably have unique information, data, or a digital enhancement package that would enhance the program and thereby creating value and a desire to collect the cards. The digital data 56 is preferably recorded on the rear surface 14 of the card is preferably recorded using known techniques used in manufacturing CDs and DVDs.

FIG. 6 is cross-sectional view of the video game card 50 of FIG. 5. The video game card 50 is preferably the same size, shape and thickness of a conventional video game cartridge. The video game card 50 is preferably designed to withstand manufacturing stresses, handling, and packaging. The video game card 50 preferably includes a protective scratch resistant coating 60 applied over the surface of the card. The video game card 50 is preferably made of a plastic material, such as polycarbonate, to allow for recording of digital data 56 on the rear surface 54 of the card 50.

While the invention has been described with reference to preferred embodiments, it is to be understood that the invention is not intended to be limited to the specific embodiments set forth above. It is recognized that those skilled in the art will appreciate that certain substitutions, alterations, modifications, and omissions may be made without departing from the spirit or intent of the invention. Accordingly, the foregoing description is meant to be exemplary only, the invention is to be taken as including all reasonable equivalents to the subject matter of the invention, and should not limit the scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A digital data trading card comprising:
a substrate having a front surface and a rear surface;
5 a decorated graphic layer applied to the front surface of the substrate;
a digital data layer recorded on the rear surface of the substrate; and
a protective coating applied over the entire surface of the card.
2. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the substrate is the
same size, shape and thickness as a conventional trading card.
- 10 3. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the substrate includes
an opening extending through the center of the substrate.
4. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the substrate is a
plastic material.
5. The digital data trading card of claim 4 wherein the plastic material is
15 polycarbonate.
6. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the decorated graphic
layer is printed on the front surface of the substrate.
7. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the digital data
includes audio, video and textual data.
- 20 8. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the digital data
includes links to Web sites.

9. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the digital data provides access to the Internet.

10. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the digital data is accessed by inserting the digital data trading card into a computer.

5 11. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the digital data is accessed by inserting the digital data trading card into a CD player.

12. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the digital data is accessed by inserting the digital data trading card into a DVD player.

13. The digital data trading card of claim 1 wherein the protective coating
10 is a scratch resistant coating.

14. A digital data gift card comprising:
a substrate having a front surface and a rear surface with an opening extending through the substrate;

a decorated graphic layer printed to the front surface of the substrate;
15 digital data recorded on the rear surface of the substrate; and
a protective coating applied over the entire surface of the card.

15. The digital data trading card of claim 14 wherein the substrate is the same size, shape and thickness as a conventional credit card or gift card.

16. The digital data trading card of claim 14 wherein the substrate is a
20 polycarbonate material.

17. The digital data trading card of claim 14 wherein the digital data includes audio, video and textual data.

18. The digital data trading card of claim 14 wherein the digital data includes links to Web sites.

19. The digital data trading card of claim 14 wherein the digital data provides access to the Internet.

5 20. The digital data trading card of claim 14 wherein the digital data is accessed by inserting the digital data trading card into a computer.

21. The digital data trading card of claim 14 wherein the digital data is accessed by inserting the digital data trading card into a CD player.

22. The digital data trading card of claim 14 wherein the digital data is
10 accessed by inserting the digital data trading card into a DVD player.

23. The digital data trading card of claim 14 wherein the protective coating is a scratch resistant coating.

24. A digital data video game card comprising:
a substrate having a front surface and a rear surface;
15 a decorated graphic layer applied to at least one surface of the substrate; and
digital data stored on the substrate accessible by inserting the digital data
video game card into a video game player.

25. The digital data trading card of claim 24 wherein the digital data includes audio, video and textual data.

20 26. The digital data trading card of claim 24 wherein the digital data includes a special player or character not available in standard video games.

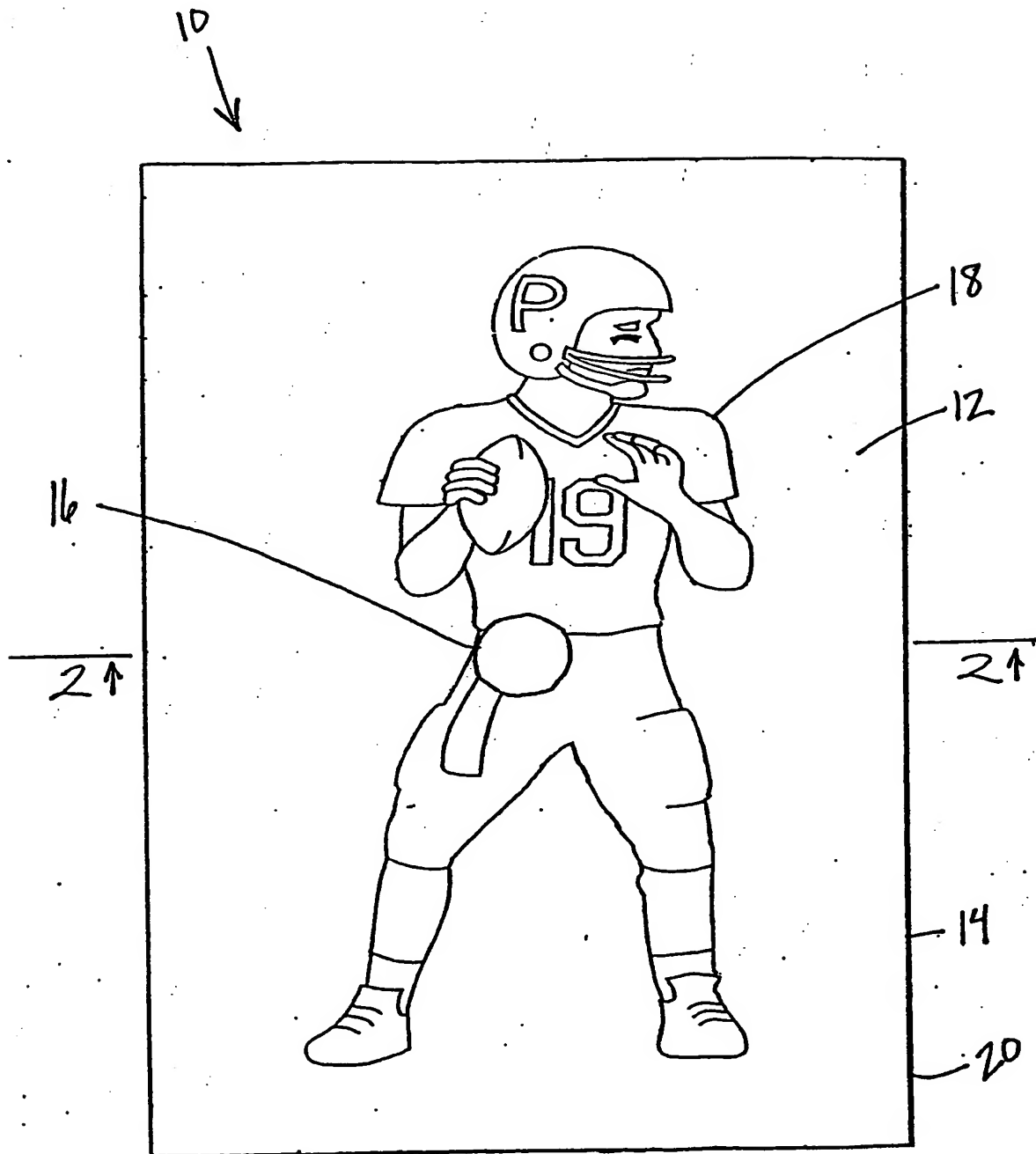
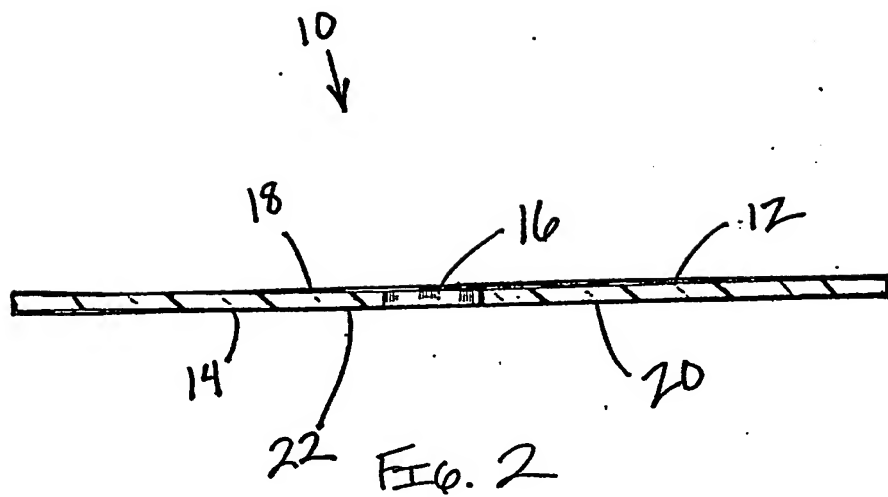
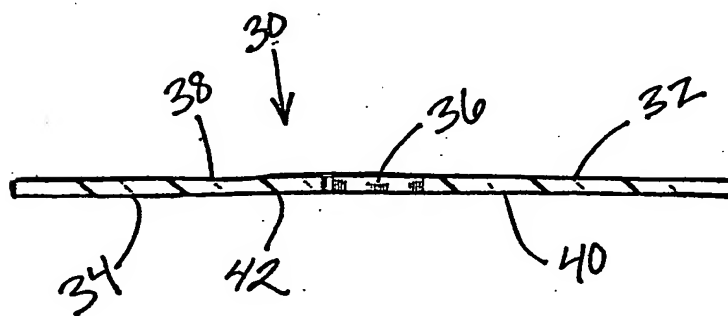
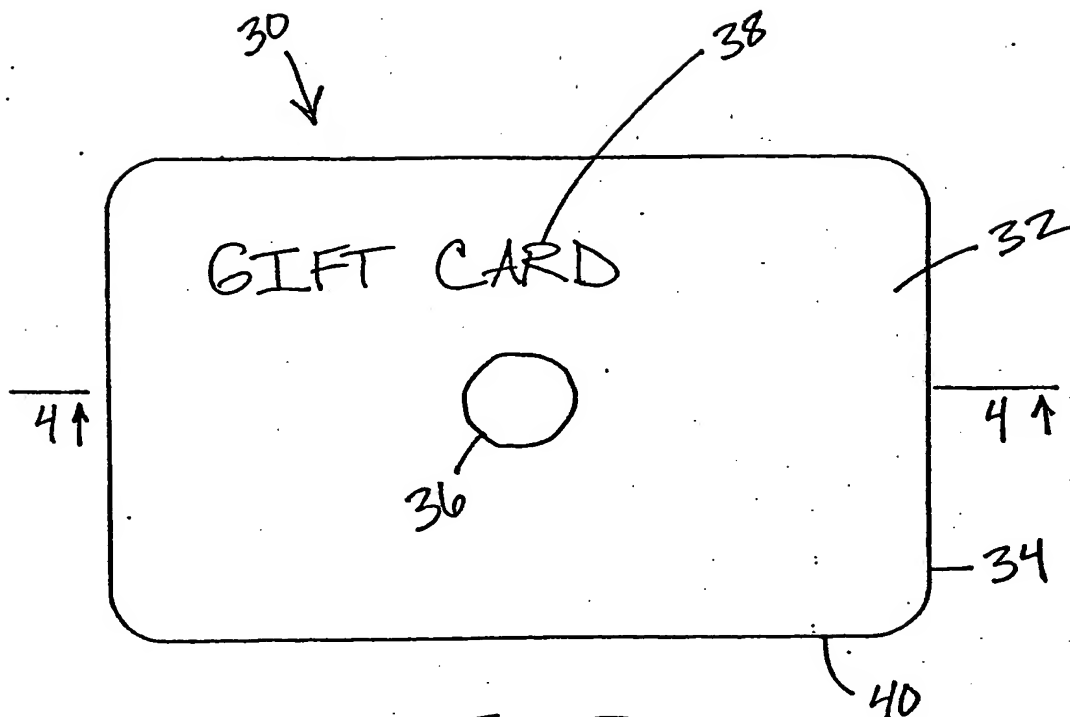
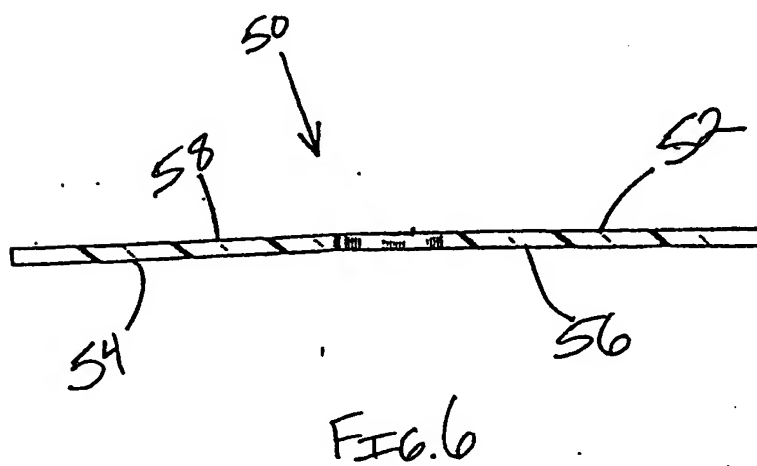
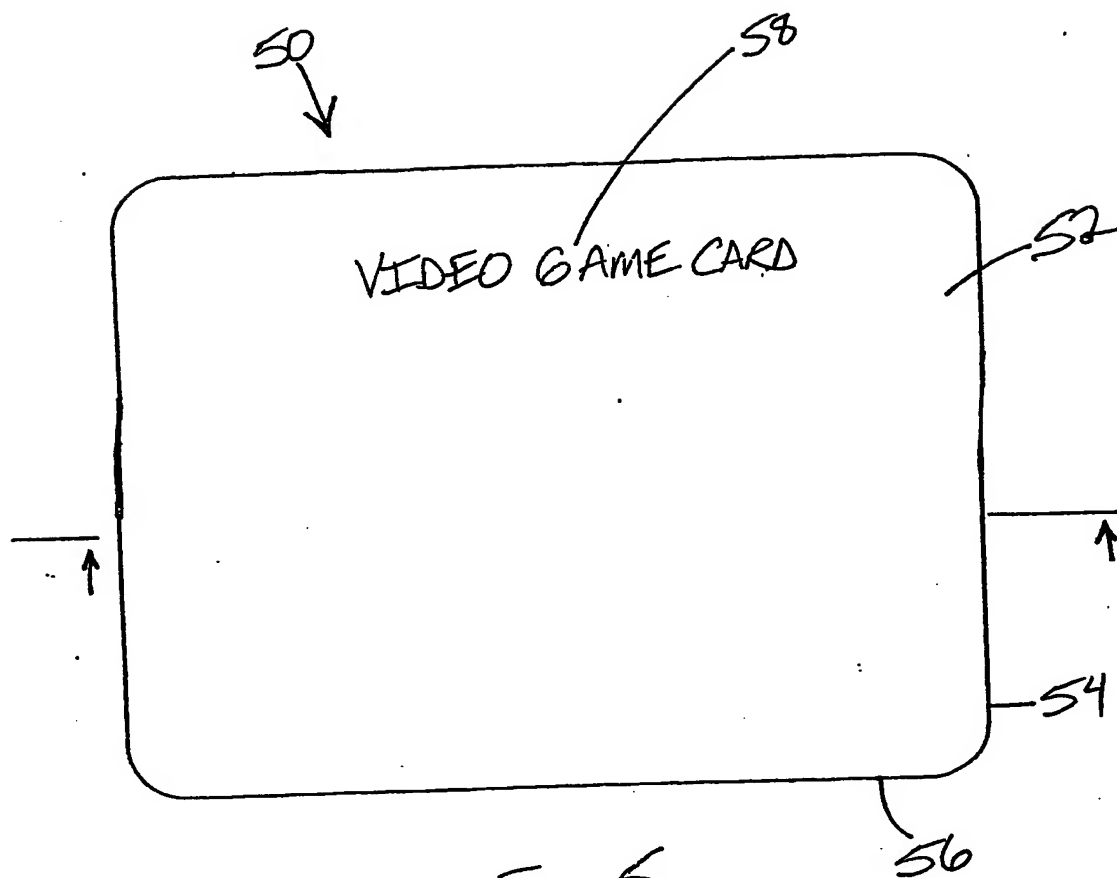


FIG. 1







INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : A63F 13/00

US CL : 463/43

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 4663/43

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
east

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2002/0080714 A1 (PIERSON et al) 27 June 2002 (27.06.2002), see entire document	1-7,11,12,14-22,24,25
Y		8,9,13,23
Y	US 5,317,337 A (EWALDT) 31 May 1994 (31.05.1994), see entire document	13, 23
Y	US 2002/0077180 A1 (SWANBERG et al) 20 June 2002 (20.06.2002), see entire document	1-26
Y	US 6,200,216 B1 (PEPPEL) 13 March 2001 (13.03.2001) see entire document	1-26
Y	US 2001/0039206 A1 (PEPPEL) 08 November 2001 (08.11.2001), see entire document	1-26
Y	US 2002/0068636 A1 (NOJIRI et al) 06 June 2002 (06.06.2002), see entire document	1-26
Y	US 2002/0165794 A (ISHIHARA) 07 November 2002 (07.11.2002), see entire document	1-26
Y	US 2002/0155893 A1 (SWANBERG et al) 24 October 2002, see entire document	1-26

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☐ See patent family annex.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
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C. (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5,930,767 A (REBER et al) 27 July 1999 (27.07.1999) see entire document	1-26

Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of second sheet) (January 2004)